

8th September 2020

[REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Official Information Act Request for – Elective Surgery Waiting Lists and Policies

I write in response to your Official Information Act request received by us 4th August 2020 requesting the following information:

1. Does the Board have a policy to prioritise Maori and/or Pasifika patients on elective surgery waiting lists?
2. If so, how long has this policy been in force and when is it scheduled to end?
3. If so, what is the rationale for this policy?
4. If so, is the policy based on the pressures of deferred surgery due to COVID-19?
5. If there is no such policy, why has the Board not followed the lead of the Capital and Coast District Health Board?
6. What is the current number of deferred elective surgeries due to the pressures of COVID-19?

Counties Manukau Health Response:

1. Does the Board have a policy to prioritise Maaori and/or Pasifika patients on elective surgery waiting lists?
 - a. If so, how long has this policy been in force and when is it scheduled to end?
 - b. If so, what is the rationale for this policy?
 - c. If so, is the policy based on the pressures of deferred surgery due to COVID-19?

Counties Manukau Health (CM Health) does not have a policy to prioritise patients solely based on their ethnicity. All of our patients are prioritised on the basis of clinical need. While the DHB has no such policy at this time we continue to look at solutions to equitably address the needs of our Maori and Pacific communities for access to elective surgery.

2. If there is no such policy, why has the Board not followed the lead of the Capital and Coast District Health Board?

CM Health has a very high population of Maaori and Pasifika patients (the latter the highest in the country). Increasing the priority of all patients in this group would likely divert resources to patients with lower clinical need, possibly disadvantaging Maaori and Pasifika with high needs. CM Health has chosen to take a targeted approach, identifying specific areas where selected health interventions will result in most benefit to our most disadvantaged communities.

3. What is the current number of deferred elective surgeries due to the pressures of COVID-19?

Currently we estimate that approximately 1500 elective cases were deferred due to COVID-19 Level 2-4 requirements. We have subsequently performed 228 cases over and above our normal clinical workload, this includes undertaking additional operations during Saturdays in June 2020, and continue to work to reduce the number of cases waiting through a variety of strategies.

For context CM Health employs over 7,500 staff and provides health and support services to people living in the Counties Manukau region (approx. 569,400 people). We see over 118,000 people in our Emergency Department each year, and over 2,000 visitors come through Middlemore Hospital daily.

Our services are delivered via hospital, outpatient, ambulatory and community-based models of care. We provide regional and supra-regional specialist services i.e. for orthopaedics, plastics, burns and spinal services. There are also several specialist services provided including tertiary surgical services, medical services, mental health and addiction services.

You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or Freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response or an edited version of this may be published on the Counties Manukau Health website. If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider your views.

Yours sincerely



Fepulea'i Margie Apa
Chief Executive Officer
Counties Manukau Health